



# EASTWICK, EDWARD BACKHOUSE

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**EASTWICK, EDWARD BACKHOUSE** (b. Warfield, Berkshire, 13 March 1814; d. Ventnor, Isle of Wight, 16 July 1883), Orientalist and diplomat, best known for his translations from Persian and Indian languages.

Eastwick was born to a family with a long history of service in the [British East India Company](#). He was educated at Charterhouse School and at Balliol and Merton Colleges in Oxford. After graduating, at the age of twenty-two, he joined the Bombay infantry as a cadet in 1836. While in India, he acquired an extensive knowledge of Indian and other oriental languages, and passed an exam as an interpreter with a high grade. His linguistic abilities in Oriental languages soon enabled him to leave the army and establish himself in civil and political employment. Ill health, however, forced him to return to Europe in about 1842. He spent some time in Frankfurt where he diligently studied linguistics. He was appointed Professor of Urdu by the East India Company at their private college at Haileybury in Hertfordshire in September 1845, and became the librarian of the college in 1850. He remained in this post until the abolition of the college in 1857. Between 1857 and the start of his political career a couple of years later, when he was appointed assistant political secretary at the India Office, Eastwick studied law and was called to the bar. He became a barrister on 6 June 1860, but he does not seem to have ever practiced law.



On 1 July 1860, Eastwick left England as the secretary of the legation to the Persian court. He traveled via Paris and Marseille to Athens and Istanbul. Then, on a French ship he reached Sinope (Sinop) via the Black Sea, and, taking a Russian steamer through Tbilisi (Teflis) and eventually Naḳčevān and Tabriz, arrived in Tehran on 20 October. There he was lodged on his own in a scarcely furnished room in the British Mission. The rest of the British diplomatic staff were then resident at their summer retreat in Qolhak in northern Tehran. Eastwick stayed in Persia for three years.

During the spring of 1861 Eastwick traveled to Rašt, visiting Soleymāniya and [Fath-‘Ali Shah](#)’s (r. 1797-1834) palace there. At his own request, Eastwick was put in charge of the English Mission in Khorasan, and arrived in Mashad by August 1862. He formed a firm friendship with the governor of the province, Solṭān-Morād Mirzā Ḥosām-al-Salṭana (1818-83), and mediated between the Afghans and the Persian government. Eastwick was appointed Chargé d’Affaires of the British Mission in Tehran and, upon arriving at the capital on 9 December 1862, was well received by the Qajar administration. He had several audiences with Nāṣer-al-Din Shah (r. 1848-96). At a private reception he successfully negotiated the establishment of a telegraph system by the British, which had hitherto been installed by the government. On 2 February 1863, Eastwick received orders to leave Tehran, which displeased him greatly, and he was dismayed at the British government’s decision to leave its Mission without any experienced diplomat. He left Tehran, going back to England via Baghdad on 14 February 1863.

In 1864 Eastwick was chosen as a commissioner for arranging a Venezuelan loan, for which commission he also worked in 1867. In 1866 he was chosen private secretary to Robert Cecil, Lord Cranborn, who was secretary of state in India between July 1866 and March 1867. Eastwick was awarded the Companionship of the Order of the Bath on 6 November 1866, and was made an honorary Master of Arts at Oxford in 1875. He was a member of many learned societies in Britain, France, and Germany. He became a fellow of the Royal Society in 1851, and a fellow of the Society of the Antiquarian on 17 March 1853. He was awarded a C.B.E. (Commander [of the Order] of the British Empire) on 6 March 1866. Eastwick was elected as a Conservative Member of Parliament for Penryn and Falmouth from 1868 until he lost his seat in 1874. Thereafter financial problems forced him to retire from public activities and devote the rest of his life to literary work. He died in 1883 and was survived by his wife Lucy (née King). There is no known likeness of Edward Backhouse



Eastwick.

Eastwick was a prolific writer and scholar. Between 1859 and 1883 he wrote many books on the cities of India. He also edited and prefaced many books, including an edition of the *Golestān-e Sa'di* (Eastwick, 1850) and an edition of *Zartošt-nāma* which was translated into English as *The Life and Ethics of Zoroaster ...* by Alexander Rogers and published in London in 1910. Eastwick is, however, best known for his translations of the *Golestān* of Sa'di (Eastwick, 1852) and the *Anwār-e Sohayli* of Ḥosayn Wā'ez Kāšefi (Eastwick, 1854).

Eastwick's translation of the *Golestān*, though largely accurate, omits the entire fifth chapter entitled "On Love and Youth;" presumably its homosexual and pederastic themes were offensive to the mores of the time. For this omission he was accused of bowdlerizing the *Golestān* (Defrémery, p. iii). Unlike the previous prose translators of the *Golestān*, Eastwick was the first English translator to mirror the prose and verse parts of the original. Although at first his translation was not well received, and Edward FitzGerald (1809-83) called his verse "wretched" and considered the style of his prose to be "on the wrong tack" altogether (FitzGerald, II, p. 119), it has since been praised and "appears the most satisfactory [of the early translations]; in particular he is relatively successful with the verse sections of the work, which he translates as verse" (Davis, p. 1213).

Eastwick's translation of Ḥosayn Wā'ez Kāšefi's *Anwār-e Sohayli* was its first translation to appear in English. The book was dedicated "to Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria," and received great acclaim. In his preface, however, Eastwick rather predictably admits (p. ix) that his translation is primarily intended for "those who desire to qualify themselves for examination in our Indian territories. To them the present Translation is offered with far more confidence than to the English public, for it is impossible not to perceive that those very characteristics of style, which form its chiefest beauties in the eye of Persian taste, will appear to the European reader as ridiculous blemishes. The undeviating equipoise of bi-propositional sentences, and oftentimes their length and intricacy; and hyperbole and sameness of metaphor and the rudeness and unskilfulness of the plots of some of the stories, cannot but be wearisome and repulsive to the better and simpler judgment of the West." Eastwick would not have been aware of the fact that Kāšefi's "style bears the unmistakable hallmark of aesthetic corruption, and would have been as contemptuously spurned by a generation that had never known Joveyni and Vaṣṣāf ..." (Arberry, p. 404). For all their Victorianism,



Eastwick's translations are accurate, though the compression of the verse sometimes makes the exact meaning hard to follow. His translation of the *Golestān* reads better and is less archaic than that of the *Anwār-e Sohayli*.

Eastwick's *Journal of a Diplomat's Three Years' Residence in Persia* (Eastwick, 1864) is dedicated to "Sultān Murād Mirza, Hisāmu's Saltanah, Prince-Governor of Khúrāsān, the Illustrious son of the Abbās Mirza, Conqueror of Meshed, Merv, and Herát, Uncle of the Reigning Sháh of Persia, and his ablest and most devoted servant, These Sketches of Persia are Inscribed in Token of Farewell, and as a Feeble Mark of Admiration and Esteem, By His Faithful and Attached Friend, The Author." In the preface, Eastwick points out that out of respect for the Europeans he has changed all their names. The first volume of the travels contains a meticulous description of his journey to Tehran, the English Mission, and its setup and working procedure, as well as the Mission's relation with the French and Russian embassies. In describing Fath-'Ali Shah's palace in Solṭāniya, he takes pain in providing a family tree of the Qajar dynasty. The second volume encompasses the political activities of the Afghan warlord, Dost-Moḥammad Khan (r. 1843-63, see [AFGHANISTAN x.](#)), and his attack on Herat, which was then ruled by Solṭān-Morād Mirzā Ḥosām-al-Salṭana, the governor of Khorasan.

Throughout his memoirs Eastwick is very candid. His descriptions are vivid, and his language is plain but witty, and at times sarcastic. On the diplomatic side he gives precise details of his reports to the Parliament. At times he is indignant at the poor accommodation he was given on his travels within Persia, but very fond of the "memorable Istikbal[s]" which he received wherever he went. On the political side, the Qajar government found him amenable; obviously his knowledge of Persia had endeared him to the court, and the shah himself found him very efficient and well intentioned and was unhappy at his sudden recall after such a short time in office. To show his appreciation "and in token of his regard" the shah presented him "with a diamond snuff-box, which his Majesty hoped I would value the more as being one which he had occasionally used himself" (Eastwick, 1864, II, p. 323).



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(Parvin Loloï)

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